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AUTHOR	Aldrich, Jennifer E.
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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the development of an early childhood education Professional Development School (PDS) partnership between an all kindergarten elementary school and a comprehensive state university. The partnership emphasized collaboration. The PDS coordinator began the process of collaboration by meeting with the school principal. The principal was interested in a PDS partnership and invited university faculty and the PDS coordinator to attend a school faculty meeting to discuss a potential partnership. Teachers supported the effort. They attended a PDS summer workshop and participated in a focus group/brainstorming session designed to help them understand what a PDS entailed. During this session, school faculty members expressed their expectations and roles for PDS interns. While teachers were positive about the benefits of a PDS for their students and for the interns, they did not mention their own development. Therefore, the PDS coordinator and university faculty pointed out possible benefits for the elementary teachers. All stakeholders agreed to meet monthly to discuss literature of interest to the group in order to promote learning. Currently, university interns are in the kindergarten classrooms twice a week, and university faculty visit various classrooms each Tuesday and Thursday. (Contains 10 references.) (SM)

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Partnership and Collaboration: The Foundation For Professional Development School Partnerships

Jennifer E. Aldrich, EdD
Central Missouri State University
Warrensburg, MO

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Partnership and Collaboration: The Foundation
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Educational reform and accountability centers around teachers and how they teach. Linda Darling-Hammond (1998) writes, "Teachers learn best by studying, doing, and reflecting; by collaborating with other teachers; by looking closely at students and their work; and by sharing what they see" (p. 8).

Many people believe that well prepared teachers are the best hope for school reform. Therefore, calls for reform in education have exerted pressure to change the system of educating teachers Association of Teacher Educators, 1986; Cobb, 2001; Goodlad, 1990, Ishler, 1995). Currently a greater emphasis is being put on the need for teacher preparation to center on how the preparation of teachers impacts students. Thus, university faculty, teachers, teacher candidates and students have a stake in collaborative efforts of PDS partnerships. Marshall (1999) states that "children benefit from having increased numbers of adults supporting their learning; inservice teachers learn new ideas from preservice teachers; university professors need continued experiences working with children and inservice teachers in order to nourish their own instruction about teaching; and, teaching, like learning, is a dynamic experience for which one is never totally prepared and opportunities for tutelage come from a multitude of sources, including colleagues, mentors, students, and families" (p. 3).

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) recently developed standards for Professional Development Schools (PDS). Five standards address the characteristics of PDSs and ten key concepts are embedded in the standards to describe the purposes and principles of professional development schools (NCATE, 2001). The five standards include "learning community, accountability and quality assurance, collaboration, equity and diversity, structures, resources and roles" (NCATE, 2001, p. 6). These standards guide the development and continuation of partnerships with the

overall goal of the meeting diverse learning needs of all learners. To supplement the standards, NCATE created developmental guidelines for four stages in the development of PDSs. The four stages include:

Beginning Level – Beliefs, verbal commitments, plans, organization and initial work is consistent with the mission of PDS partnerships. This means that even at the earliest stage of development PDS partners are committed to the key concepts of PDSs and their earliest work addresses how to take initial steps in that direction.

Developing Level – Partners are pursuing the mission of the PDS partnership and there is partial institutional support. At the developing stage, partners are engaged in PDS work in many ways. However, their supporting institutions have not yet made changes in their policies and practices that would provide evidence of institutionalization.

At Standard – The mission of the PDS partnership is integrated into the partnering institutions. PDS work is expected and supported, and it reflects what is known about best practices. At this state partners work together effectively resulting in positive outcomes for all learners. Partnering institutions have made changes in policies and practices that reflect what has been learned through PDS work, and that support PDS participants in meaningful ways.

Leading Level – Advanced PDS work is sustaining and generative, leading to systematic changes in policy and practice in partner institutions, as well as to impact on policy at the district, state, and national levels. At this stage of development, the PDS partnership has reached its potential for leveraging change outside its boundaries and its supporting institutions, and has an impact in the broader education community. (NCATE, 2001, p. 7)

Collaboration between faculties at the university and the elementary school not just cooperation is essential to growth and success of a professional development school. Collaboration determines the ability of both schools and universities to accept the values, conflicts, failures, lapses in commitment, and most important, the erratic nature of progress toward the ultimate restructuring goal (Stirzaker & Splittgerber, 1991). The quality of collaboration between and among the diverse stakeholders becomes key to the success of PDS programs. Collaboration, as a necessary element of PDS partnerships, may be the key to success or might lead to the road of failure (Cooper, 1998; Cowart & Rademacher, 1998).

When the early childhood PDS partnership between an all kindergarten elementary school and a comprehensive state university began spring 2002 (university interns actually participating in the PDS experience fall 2002) collaboration was a major focus. While all of the standards are being addressed and important to the success of this new PDS partnership, this paper will concentrate on Standard III: Collaboration. NCATE defines collaboration:

> PDS partners and partner institutions systematically move from independent to interdependent practice by committing themselves and committing to each other to engage in joint work focused on implementing the PDS mission. They collaboratively design roles and structures to support the PDS work and individual and institutional parity. PDS partners use their shared work to improve outcomes for P-12 students, candidates, faculty, and other professionals. The PDS partnership systematically recognizes and celebrates their joint work and the contributions of each partner. (NCATE, 2001, p. 23)

In the beginning – the PDS coordinator began the process of collaboration with the principal of the kindergarten elementary school in the spring 2002 semester. (The district already had three elementary schools participating with the university in PDS partnerships.) The principal was very interested in creating a partnership and invited the university faculty member and PDS coordinator to

attend a school faculty meeting to talk with the teachers regarding their interest in a partnership with the university. The overall response to the idea of a PDS was favorable so the faculty member arranged to change the time period of the Early Childhood Curriculum Course to correspond with times that would be provide interaction for the interns, the teachers, and the students. The early childhood PDS partnership was launched. Consequently, the teachers were invited to the PDS summer workshop and the "wheels were set in motion".

The first semester begins – the university faculty member arranged a meeting with the elementary principal and faculty to discuss perceptions about PDSs, and expectations and assignments for the university interns. The elementary school faculty members participated in focus group/brainstorming session with the PDS coordinator and university faculty member before school began. Collaboration at this first meeting set the tone for the partnership. The elementary faculty and principal listed some of their expectations and roles for PDS interns. Appropriate and professional dress and language, dependability, punctuality, and confidentiality were important considerations the teachers wanted to stress with the interns. The elementary faculty stressed their desire for the students to interact with the individual children and to participate in the activities of the room. In addition, they listed specific jobs such as helping with journal writing, reading to individual children, and helping individual children. The elementary faculty had agreed to participate not only in mentoring interns but also in research to document this new PDS's development.

During this first meeting, a focus group research technique was used and the group answered the following questions:

What is a PDS?

What makes a PDS work?

Who is involved in a PDS? What roles do these people play?

Who benefits from a PDS? How do they benefit?

What does an ideal PDS look like?

The participants' understanding and answers to the above questions determined our discussion. One faculty member stated, "[A] professional development school [is] a school who grows together and develops toward the best way to educate children." Another teacher remarked, "[The] roles for teachers are to facilitate the growth of the PDS intern in the education profession."

Overall, the faculty was positive about the benefits for their students and for the interns but did not mention their own professional development. Therefore, the PDS coordinator and university faculty member pointed out possible benefits for the elementary teachers. Sandholtz and Finan (1998) stated, "the heart of the program is the creation of a professional learning environment promoting teacher learning in various forms" (p. 3). In an effort to promote learning, the elementary faculty participating in the PDS, the principal, and the university faculty member has agreed to meet monthly to discuss literature that is of interest to the group.

The story continues – the early childhood curriculum course is being taught in the elementary school art room. The university interns are in the kindergarten classrooms twice a week and the university faculty visits various classrooms each Tuesday and Thursday.

The future – the elementary faculty will teach lessons to the early childhood curriculum students. At our first meeting, some ideas began formulating around assessment and journal writing. What a great collaboration!

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Signature: Jennifer E. Aldrich	Printed Name/Position/Title: Jennifer Aldrich, Professor, Ed.D
Organization/Address: Central Missouri State University Lovinger 3183, Warrensburg, MO 64093	Telephone: 660-543-8657 FAX: 660-543-4382 E-Mail Address: aldrich@csmu1.cmsu.edu Date: 10/14/02

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